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III.

THE CONGRESS OF BERLIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

IF the Congress of Berlin has failed to restore peace to the East, it has at all events condemned England to an active participation in European politics from which she had so long abstained. For many years past the Liberal party had resolutely adhered to the principle of non-intervention, and the result had been gradually to lower the prestige of the country, and to expose its Government to the charge of insular selfishness, and indifference to the fate of old allies and treaty engagements. It was natural that this lukewarmness should convert friends into enemies, who revenged themselves by predicting the speedy decay of the empire, and by making combinations abroad which ignored England altogether as a factor in European politics. The advent of the Conservatives to power, under a chief whose restless ambition and love of dramatic effect were not to be satisfied by the passive *rôle* to which his predecessors had doomed the nation, inaugurated a new era of foreign politics for which the popular mind had become prepared; the contempt for England, which was freely expressed by foreign governments and the press of Europe, had produced a general irritation, of which Lord Beaconsfield (then Mr. Disraeli) was not slow to take advantage, and the tendency shown by Russia to reopen the Eastern question supplied him with the excuse he so eagerly desired of embarking upon a vigorous foreign policy. He threw down the gantlet to Russia by the purchase of the Suez Canal shares, the proclamation of the queen as Empress of India, and the rejection of the Berlin Memorandum after it had received the assent of the principal powers of the Continent, and astonished Europe by the indications which these acts afforded of his intention to force his

Government once more into an active participation in its affairs. At the moment when his policy would have culminated and prevented the Russo-Turkish War by a positive declaration to Russia that any attempt on her part to interfere with the treaty of 1856 would involve a declaration of hostilities by England, it was paralyzed by the Bulgarian atrocities and subsequent agitation, led by Mr. Gladstone and some of the leading Liberal organs, in favor of Russian interference, on religious grounds, on behalf of the Christian subjects of the Porte. The country, dazzled by the eloquence of its former prime-minister, horrified by the sensational accounts which arrived from Turkey, and unable to foresee the consequences to which such active manifestations of sympathy must of necessity give rise, it was evident, would refuse to support the ministerial policy of defiance to Russia at the critical moment; and a period of vacillation and uncertainty followed, of which Russia availed herself to declare war with Turkey and carry it to a successful issue. When, in the opinion of Lord Beaconsfield, the interests of England became so seriously menaced that any further hesitation must have been attended with the most disastrous results, he decided upon a course which forced the resignation of two of the most prominent members of his cabinet, and by a master-stroke placed England once more in the front rank of European nations. The dispatch of troops from India to the Mediterranean, while involving the most serious consequences as we shall presently see, and the circular of Lord Salisbury, compelled more than one great power reluctantly to consent to a congress in which England was destined to play a leading part. It is maintained, however, that this would not have been possible, had not a secret convention been entered into with Russia, known as the Anglo-Russian convention, which is bitterly condemned by those who believe (and as subsequent events have shown with reason) that a threat of war would have been as effectual a means of forcing on the Congress as an agreement which tied the hands of England when it met. The diplomatic advantages gained by Lord Salisbury were neutralized by the secret agreement with Russia to which he unwisely put his initials; another secret treaty with Turkey did not mend matters, and Lord Beaconsfield and his colleague went to Berlin, after having hampered themselves secretly with conditions which rendered a final

and satisfactory solution of the Eastern question impossible. The basis, moreover, upon which the negotiations at Berlin were conducted, being as immoral as it was impracticable, it was plain from the first, to any one acquainted with the local conditions, that any result arrived at from it must lead to endless trouble, confusion, and difficulty. By the ninth clause of the treaty of 1856, it was distinctly laid down that the reforms then enjoined upon Turkey were to be conducted by the Government of the sultan without any interference on the part of foreign nations; and the principle was thus established that no power had the right to protect the subjects of another power, on the ground of a similarity of view in certain theological tenets. In defiance of this clause, the very powers who agreed to it in 1856 met at Berlin, 1878, to frame another treaty, adopting as its basis this right in regard to the very power for whose sake it had been repudiated. Because it was clear to the cosignatories of the treaty of 1856 that the only hope of tranquillity for Turkey was non-interference in its internal affairs—one of the parties to this treaty having proved the accuracy of this view by a violation of the treaty, and an interference on the ground of religion, which produced the very evil anticipated—therefore the other powers, by a curious inversion of logic, meet formally to ratify the principle which had reopened the Eastern question, experience having shown that this question never would have been reopened had the opposite principle enunciated by the former treaty been adhered to. In other words, the plenipotentiaries at Berlin have introduced into the code of nations the right of any one or more nations to protect their co-religionists wherever they may be found by means of their own consuls and commissions, and, in the event of their diplomatic agents reporting unsatisfactorily, forcibly to partition any such country among themselves. No remonstrances on the part of the local populations against being thus summarily transferred, without being consulted, to the tender mercies of a strange government, are to be attended to; armed resistance in defense of their homes and hearths is to be termed insurrection, and the net result “peace with honor!” The effect of flinging the Treaty of Berlin at the heads of the heterogeneous races and religions of the East has been precisely that of throwing a fire-brand into a powder-magazine. The only possible chance of

quiet would have been the application of the principles of the treaty of 1856 intensified, and provision made against those infractions of it by Russia which culminated in the late war. The effect of the present treaty is not merely to justify for the future any such infraction on the part of Russia, but to compel other powers by treaty forcibly to intervene on religious grounds. Thus Austria is at this moment, under the treaty, militarily occupying two provinces of Turkey in order to reform them, and is reducing the numbers hereafter to be reformed by a preliminary process of extermination. England has undertaken to reform the whole of Asiatic Turkey, and has appropriated Cyprus. Europe generally has taken charge of Eastern Roumelia by means of a commission which the great powers have appointed, in the wild delusion that they will be able to introduce reforms by peaceable methods; and Greece is clamoring for some neighboring Turkish provinces, on the simple ground, as enunciated by a late official circular, that they are necessary in order to increase the happiness of Greeks generally, and her right to obtain territory on this principle has been formally established by a clause in the Treaty of Berlin, and will doubtless sooner or later be gratified at the cost of much bloodshed.

It is certainly a remarkable phenomenon that the nineteenth century should have witnessed the civilized powers of Europe framing a treaty upon precisely the same principles as those which justified the crusades of the middle ages, directed against the same religion, and involving an equal amount of bloodshed and misery in almost the same region. Mohammedans have never suffered any more horrible atrocities than those perpetrated since the treaty by Bulgarian and Russian Christians, if we are to believe the reports signed by the consuls of various European powers, while the whole territory which that treaty was framed to protect and reform has since become an arena upon which acts of the most savage warfare are being perpetrated in the name of humanity and religion. In the Rhodope Mountains some fifty thousand armed men are holding a Christian army at bay, and furiously defending their lares and penates. The whole of Bosnia has by virtue of this treaty and this treaty alone been converted into a bloody Christian-Mussulman battle-field. No sooner were its provisions known in Albania, than a league

was formed numbering, it is said, from fifty to a hundred thousand men, determined to fight to the last. Under the treaty, the Greeks, aided probably by the Italians, will ere long declare war against Turkey; under the treaty thousands of Tazas have found themselves compelled to abandon their native mountains, and as friendless and starving refugees, men and women and children, are flocking to some region where they may be safe from the oppression they dread. The inhabitants of the Dobrudja have announced their intention of resisting to the last its annexation by Roumania; while the Russian army refuses to evacuate the fertile plains of Eastern Roumelia until the provisions of the treaty in regard to that province, which they well know to be impracticable, are put into operation.

It is indeed now becoming tolerably apparent that the secret of the readiness which Russia displayed to make concessions at Berlin arose from the fact that in practice she did not mean to carry them out. She trusted to the chapter of accidents for excuses which should justify her in refusing to do so, and to the unwillingness of Lord Beaconsfield to admit that the peace which he had secured at Berlin was an utter failure. The Anglo-Russian convention and the Anglo-Turkish treaty placed England in a position in which Russia could well afford to leave her. The impression that the Berlin Congress had resulted in a diplomatic triumph for Lord Beaconsfield has already faded away. It was due entirely to the fact that the Treaty of San Stefano had existed, and that its exaggerated provisions had been seriously modified. Had that treaty never been published, no one could have denied that Russia had gained by the war more than she anticipated when she began it; while she certainly has every reason to be satisfied with the position which she now occupies. To speak in the language of whist, the honors at Berlin were divided between England and Russia, and the former won the odd trick; but in the cards which they now hold Russia has all the honors, and England cannot boast a trump. All along the line the Muscovite is victorious. Austria, with a folly which has characterized her diplomacy for many years past, refused the offer of Russia to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina two years ago, on the ground that it would be a moral crime and a political blunder to do so. She has since perpetrated the crime and com-

mitted the blunder, and placed herself politically in a position which must, sooner or later, lead to her complete disintegration. Roumania casts longing eyes on the Bukowina and part of Transylvania, to which, on the principles laid down at the Berlin Congress, a similarity of race and religion entitles her. Germany still needs the Austro-German provinces in order to complete the united Fatherland which Prince Bismarck has set himself to create. Italia Irridenta is clamorous for Trieste and the Trientine. Hungary is in a chronic state of disaffection and discontent at the prospect of being surrounded and overwhelmed by Pan-slavism, and will be compelled, ere long, to adopt measures for her self-preservation. In a word, when Austria signed the Berlin Treaty she became a party to what, in all probability, will prove her own death-warrant. Meantime the Treaty of San Stefano still exists, in so far as it has not been abrogated by special provisions in the Treaty of Berlin, and forms the basis of a treaty which has just been concluded between Turkey and Russia.

In Asia the prestige of Russia has immensely increased. She has acquired the port of Batoum and the fortress of Kars. She has annexed a portion of Armenia, and handed over a slice of Turkish territory she did not desire as a free gift to Persia. Her influence is supreme in Afghanistan, and she has embroiled England with the ruler of that country to such an extent that a war between England and Afghanistan is inevitable. As if to render her already embarrassed position less tenable, England has encumbered herself with the protectorate of the Asiatic portion of the sultan's dominions, which was unnecessary, for she could always have protected them, had she so desired, without binding herself to do so. And she has pledged herself to reforms which are impracticable—because it is impossible for the Turkish Government ever to consent to them. Placed between the upper and nether millstones of Christian and Mussulman fanaticism, the sultan and his ministers are undergoing a process of trituration which must terminate in disaster. The Christian powers do not even yet seem to comprehend that, even with the best will in the world, the Turkish Government is unable to control the turbulent fanaticism of its own population; and that, even though it may consent to every condition imposed upon it by the Christian powers, it is unable to guarantee the same compliance on the

part of the people. The late massacre of Mehemet Ali is a convincing proof of this. If England insists on an interference in the internal affairs of Asiatic Turkey, which the Mussulman element is determined to resist, the only consequence of concessions at Constantinople will be to produce a revolution there, which will overturn the sultan and his Government, and inaugurate a religious war, which must make the task of reform more impossible than ever.

The task which she has undertaken in Cyprus has already proved to be far more complicated and difficult than was anticipated, and so far the work of reform has not been attended with satisfactory results either to Turks or Christians. Why she should have hampered herself with the largest, most populous, most unhealthy, and least defensible island in the Mediterranean is another of those Asiatic mysteries which can only be accounted for by the dreams of Lord Beaconsfield's youth and the extraordinary ignorance which has characterized British diplomacy all through the question. A far safer, cheaper, and more valuable strategical point would have been Acre, on the mainland of Syria; but, even admitting that a desire to spare French susceptibilities rendered the acquisition of that fortress inexpedient, a transaction on the basis of M. Waddington's proposal at Berlin might have been completed, by which Batoum might have been saved to Turkey as a free port in return for a rectification of the Greek frontier in the sense desired by Greece, and a small Greek island have been ceded to England by Greece—such, for instance, as Milo—in return for the acquisition of Turkish territory which that country would have obtained through the rectification of frontier.

No sooner had the acquisition of Cyprus been decided upon, than the English Government was puzzled to know under what department to put it, whether it was to come under the administration of the India Office, or of the Colonial Office, or of the Foreign Office—whether, in a word, it was to be considered as still remaining Turkish, or as having been incorporated into the British dominions: this vagueness in regard to its Government still continues to exist and checks all development. Emigrants who flocked there are returning disgusted; capitalists are compelled to suspend operations until they know under what tenure they hold

land, and to what jurisdiction they are amenable; the number of troops is being diminished, so as to remove them from malarias which have filled the hospitals with fever-stricken patients. Nothing has so far transpired in Cyprus to prove that the Government is qualified to administer or reform Asia Minor, or to inspire confidence either in Christians or in Mohammedans.

The grand stroke by which Lord Beaconsfield electrified Europe, of bringing Indian troops to Malta, has caused a *contrecoup* by Russia. It was tacitly understood before that time that the European and Asiatic questions should be kept distinct; but, the moment that Indian troops appeared in Europe, Russian statesmen felt themselves relieved from all promises they had made of quiescence on the frontiers of India, and an expedition was at once organized on the Oxus, and a mission sent to the Ameer of Afghanistan. If England was going to attack Russia in Europe with India, she would retaliate by attacking England in Asia with Afghanistan. The present imbroglio on the north-western frontier may therefore be regarded indirectly as another result of the Berlin Congress, though it need never have occurred had British diplomacy in India been characterized by discretion and foresight. Lord Northbrook, who preceded Lord Lytton under a Liberal administration, pushed the policy of "masterly inactivity" to an unwise extreme; and his successor, by way of repairing the error, has rushed impetuously and inopportunistly in the opposite direction. When Yakoob Bey, the ruler of Kashgar, sent a mission proposing a defensive alliance with England, it was coldly declined; partly on the ground that we believed the assurances of Russia that she had no intention of advancing toward the British frontier, and of annexing contiguous countries, and partly because it was felt that we were the best judges when to form defensive alliances with frontier Asiatic states, and that, if there really was any danger from Russia, they must ultimately be driven into the arms of England for protection. Thus in 1873, Shere Ali, the Ameer of Afghanistan, sent an envoy to Lord Northbrook also, to seek a defensive alliance with England; this emissary foretold, step by step, the subsequent Russian advances into Asia, but the Indian Government turned a deaf ear to his entreaties. The calculations of the "masterly inactivity" politicians have been utterly falsified.

Russia is advancing toward Cabool not with bayonets, but with *bonbons*. The rôle has been reversed: England threatens a hostile invasion if the ameer will not listen to her demand for the establishment of British residents in the principal towns of Afghanistan, and Russia has undertaken the part of guide, philosopher, and friend, to his Highness. It was as injudicious at this crisis for Lord Lytton to attempt to force the ameer into being an open enemy, as it was short-sighted of Lord Northbrook to refuse five years ago to make him our secret friend. The mistakes involved by these two diametrically opposite policies are now past recall, and we have embarked upon a venture which in the opinion of the best military authorities is as unsound strategically as it certainly is unsafe diplomatically.

If England expects ever to be involved in a war with Russia on her northwestern frontier, her object should be not to annex disaffected states with a view of approaching Russia, thus lengthening her own lines of communication, and increasing her political and military difficulties, but rather to force that dangerous process upon her enemy, while she holds her armies massed behind the almost impregnable frontier positions which she now occupies. The conquest of Afghanistan must be a source of weakness morally and strategically to whichever power, whether it be Russia or England, undertakes it. Politically, it is calculated to alienate the sympathies of all Mussulman populations. If Russia were to attack Afghanistan, England could rouse the Central Asian khanates against her, and her whole frontier would be in a blaze which would render any further advance upon India an impossibility. But if England attacks Afghanistan, as it is now certain that she must, Russia comes forward as the champion of Mohammedanism, the khanates will mistrust the sympathy of England, while Russia will actively intrigue in the Mohammedan states of Hindostan, some of which, as in the case of Hyderabad, are brooding over grievances and breaches of faith, which they are only waiting a favorable opportunity to avenge.

The prospect, from a purely military point of view, is not more encouraging. Former experience of campaigns in Afghanistan has proved that the race is fanatic and warlike, the country mountainous and inhospitable, and the region altogether difficult

to subdue, and materially not worth holding. It will be impossible, either at Quetta or at Thull, the two points from which the advance into the country is to be made, to mass a sufficient body of troops to advance before the end of October or beginning of November, which only leaves a month or six weeks of open weather. In winter the passes are covered with six feet of snow. A march on Cabool would probably be too hazardous to undertake at so late a period of the year; but it is just possible if no hitch occurs, and the independent hill tribes can be bribed into friendly relations, that a British army may occupy Khoorum and Candahar before the setting in of winter, and without any serious resistance. The news which reaches us of a disturbance in Seistan at this juncture is full of significance. This territory has long been claimed by Persia, and the dispute was settled by an English frontier commission a few years ago in a manner which did not afford satisfaction either to Persia or Afghanistan. Russia has no doubt incited Persia to reopen the question, and that country may take advantage of the difficulty in which Shere Ali finds himself, of attacking his western frontier. Russia would play the part in that case of a false friend to the ameer, and lead him to his own destruction, as her relations with Persia are of such a nature that the extrusion of the frontier of that power toward India practically affords a means of access to her own armies. With the Afghan fortresses of Herat and Furrur in the hands of Persia, and Merv in the hands of Russia, with a nominee of her own at Balkh, Russia could afford to see Afghanistan crumble to pieces, which it would assuredly do with a British force at Candahar and Girishk. In other words, England would then find herself face to face with Russia, and Persia in close alliance in the mountains of Afghanistan; but it is more than probable that Russia would support Persia, keeping in the background herself, upon the same principle which she adopted in the case of Servia: although that principality was a part of Turkey, England made no remonstrance when Russian volunteers poured in to assist the Servians in their war against Turkey, and supplied her armies with officers and munitions of war. She might do the same for Persia, while still professing to be animated by the most peaceful sentiments toward England. It is not likely that the British nation would submit to such an infraction of inter-

national law, although they did not object to it in the case of Turkey. The morality which approved of Christian volunteers from Russia helping the belligerent Servian will object to those same volunteers helping the belligerent Persian, and will maintain that the international code which applies to the Turk does not apply to the Englishman. In that case England would declare war against Russia, and probably endeavor to excite the Central Asian khanates against her, while she made a demonstration against Persia on the Persian Gulf.

As Afghanistan is a country utterly valueless as a territorial possession, the effort of England should be to reconstitute it as an independent state under a friendly ruler, and offer him whatever he may be able to obtain either from Persia or Russia, affording him the same assistance against Russia that Russia was giving Persia against England, and so throw upon Russia the responsibility of a declaration of war. Still farther east, on the Russo-Chinese frontier, complications are arising which, it is evident, must lead to hostilities between Muscovite and Mongol. The Chinese have made a demand for the cession of the province of Kuldja, which was formerly Chinese territory, and was conquered from the late Yakoob Bey of Kashgar. The Russian *St. Petersburg Journal* strongly urges the Government to refuse to surrender this province, on the ground that, if Kuldja were to be ceded to China, Russian rule in the eastern part of Central Asia would be undermined. "The western frontier," says the Russian organ, "is already half in the hands of England, and, if Kuldja is given up, the operations of the Russians in that region will be attended with great risks. Eastern Turkistan would in fact no longer exist for us. The surrender of Kuldja to China would be another triumph for England, and the Mantchoos would hold their heads higher than ever. In fine, Russian influence in Central Asia would be shaken."

From all of which it would seem tolerably clear that, whichever way events turn, Central Asia is destined to become a theatre of war, if not this autumn, at any rate in the spring, and that the events transpiring will bring Russia and England into such close juxtaposition that the gravest complications are likely to arise, which may include a European war next year.

In France and Germany this cloud in the East is regarded

with some anxiety ; for, though it is a long way from the German to the Chinese frontier, there is a train of gunpowder laid the entire distance, and the spark is being applied even now.

Many indications show of late that the German chancellor does not consider the war-fiend appeased, and that he is preparing new combinations in anticipation of the coming storm. To him, at all events, it would seem that the old triple alliance is at an end. The conversations published by the *Times* correspondent in Paris of his sentiments toward Prince Gortchakoff, though denied by the German official papers, faithfully indicate the altered relations which now subsist between the two chancellors, whose long friendship depended only upon the use one thought he could make of the other. So long as Russia was the most powerful military nation next to Germany, and the hopes of France were fixed upon a Muscovite alliance which might one day lead her to her revenge, so long did Prince Bismarck keep Russia chained to his chariot-wheels by flattery and offers of service and coöperation ; but the moment that Russia, weakened and exhausted, could no longer be useful to him, he led her to a political defeat which England lacked the firmness and intelligence to inflict, and since then has abandoned her entirely to her own devices, and openly quarreled with her leading statesman. In the same manner we have significant rumors of a coolness between Prince Bismarck and Count Andrassy, and the former has undoubtedly done all in his power to encourage Austria to enter the Slav trap prepared for her in Bosnia. On the other hand, the relations of Germany and France have undergone the most marked change. An obnoxious minister has been recalled from Berlin, and M. St. Vallier, a personal friend of the emperor's, has been sent there, while the tone of the French press in regard to Germany has been sensibly modified. If Germany can be compensated by the annexation of German provinces from Austria, it is not impossible that an alliance might be cemented between France and her old enemy by the cession to the former of some territory, taken during the war, which is not German. If Prince Bismarck has designs upon weakened Russia and disintegrated Austria, it is not difficult to see how he might purchase, if not the coöperation, at all events the neutrality, of France ; and it is to be remembered that Russia as well as

Austria has German provinces. There are also good reasons why German policy should incline to a friendly understanding with England, which, since Russia can no longer be depended upon, is the power to which France has of late been clinging. It should be the object of English statesmen, if such exist, to bring about a triple Western alliance between England, France, and Germany in view of the Eastern complications which must inevitably arise again next year.

Unhappily, at the critical moment when the ship of state needs the most skillful steering, she has no pilot upon whom any reliance can be placed. The glamour of the Berlin Congress is fading away, and the public are awaking to the painful consciousness of having celebrated a victory which may yet turn out to have been a defeat, and of having proclaimed the triumph of a statesman whose only merit lies in the fact that he has not plunged the country into so deep an abyss as his great opponent seemed to desire.

This will not prevent a reaction setting in as the clouds gather more thickly on the horizon, and the first notes of war are sounded. It will be all the more intense because it will result from keen disappointment, and a vague sense on the part of the public that they have been taken in. Already, the Liberals are giving tongue in this sense like a pack of hounds opening on a new scent. Though they have been too disunited, ever since they first hounded on Russia to make the war from which all subsequent trouble has arisen, to propose a policy or offer a solution which the country could adopt, they are united enough now in calling attention to the blunders of the Government in grappling with the dangers which they themselves created. However incapable the present cabinet may be of directing the destinies of the country, their opponents have shown themselves infinitely more ignorant of existing conditions in the East, and far more incompetent to deal with them. Nowhere is this shallow appreciation more conspicuously apparent than in the daily papers. With the exception of one evening journal, they have manifested neither independence of party considerations nor an accurate knowledge of the questions with which they have had to deal. It is only now dawning upon them, for instance, that the majority of Mohammedans in Turkey are not Turks, that the power of the Gov-

ernment to execute reform is limited, and that concessions wrung from the sultan may be refused altogether by his subjects. It is now apparent that the reforms which Christian Europe proposed to force on Turkey two years ago could only be introduced after wholesale massacres, no matter whether the Porte consented to them or not; but at that time the humanitarian papers were ringing with the assurance that, if England had only put on a little more pressure at the Constantinople conference, the sultan would have given in, and the question would have been solved. They have since then applauded the Treaty of Berlin, which they are now beginning to admit has had the effect of creating new problems, instead of solving old ones; they are panic-stricken by the new phase which the question has assumed in India, and alternate between empty bluster and feeble recrimination. The public, bewildered and misled, is thoroughly disgusted alike with its politicians and their newspaper organs, and feels that the country is drifting into an unknown sea of peril, without either a pilot or a compass. The Liberal leaders, who have shown themselves ignorant, parochial, and insular, desire to draw the country into its shell, and leave India, the colonies, and foreign interests generally, to their fate, while the Government have blundered fatally in their struggles after "imperialization;" they have mixed up questions which might have been kept separated, have imported Asiatic into European politics, have assumed responsibilities which it is impossible they can ever fulfill, have acquired protectorates and territory which are burdensome and valueless, have let loose forces of religious fanaticism, and pitted races against each other which can only exhaust themselves with fire and sword; they have sanctioned a principle of spoliation of territory on religious grounds, and of internal interference in the domestic concerns of other nations which must lead to revolution wherever it is applied; and they have condemned their country to play the most prominent part in the chaos which they have thus evoked, and themselves to a policy which must inevitably lead to their downfall.

AN OLD DIPLOMATIST.